

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL OF POPULAR LITERATURE

Science and Arts.

CONDUCTED BY WILLIAM AND ROBERT CHAMBERS.

No. 291.

SATURDAY, JULY 30, 1859.

PRICE 1½d.

'GOD DEFEND THE RIGHT.'

SUCH was the sentiment under which men long ago professed to try their private cause in battle. In all public war there is a like underlying idea, that it is a kind of arbitration placed in the hands of the divine ruler of the world. Two states, or whatever be the parties at issue, each feeling right in its own intention, or sense of justice, such as it is, is willing to raise the cry, 'God defend the right,' however unwilling in its obstinacy or opinionativeness afterwards to acknowledge an adverse decision as a divine award that it was in the wrong. Did men see better where the right lies, they would less need to ask God to decide on their claims. Unfortunately, self-love, erroneous maxims, hardened habits, and a hundred other things, confound their sense of the real right, and the stern arbitrament therefore becomes inevitable, whatever peace-advocates may say to the contrary.

Such being the case, it becomes of importance to learn whether the award usually accords with what an impartial power would be disposed to consider the right, or otherwise.

We think that European history during late centuries—to go no further—clearly shows that there is a tendency of events in favour of the right—accepting as such what is wisest, justest, and most conducive to the general interests of humanity. And if men would study the nature of what has been thus in a manner pronounced for, they might come to trim their conduct in future cases, as proposing litigants do by a study of decisions, and thus save a great deal of the bloody arbitrament in future.

For example, in the great civil war of our own country, there was a decisive pronouncement in favour of the opponents of the king. Charles was wedded to antiquated ideas, was imperious, insincere, altogether insufferable—and he was punished by the total failure of his cause. But his opponents were in their turn fanatical and sanguinary, and carrying matters to an opposite extreme, were punished by a period of reaction, which threw them below the feet of royalty. James II., offending anew like his father, met the gentler punishment of the loss of his throne. Some see, in such events, a divine interference for protestantism and progressive politics; but it is not necessary to go upon that difficult line. It is enough that God has so made the human heart, and so arranged for the interests of his creatures, that what is narrow, exclusive, tyrannical, offensive to the religious feelings of a majority, opposed to general

human interests, is difficult to support, and most likely, in a struggle, to go to the wall.

When the French people, rising in indignation from a long course of oppression, attempted to rectify their government, and were set upon by a troop of arbitrary monarchs, who felt rebuked and endangered by what was taking place, they had what most of us now believe to have been the right on their side, and the result was that four years saw them—not partitioned, or suppressed, as was expected—but victorious in numberless battles, and in possession of Holland, the Rhine, and Italy. Britain, which had been led by a stupid terror to attack them, was punished with a long and expensive war. But France became in her turn, through an insane love of conquest, an offender, and her punishment in due time arrived in foreign occupation and the re-imposition of a hateful dynasty. A common mind sees in this change only the fickleness of Fortune; but it is, in reality, in each case alike, a divine justice which shapes the issue. The feelings and rights of nations cannot be outraged without there arising a tendency to get them vindicated and protected. The patriotic outbreak of Germany in 1813 was as righteous as the vigour of the belligerent French republicans was in 1792, and it was equally approved by that divine voice which sounds in the Event.

In the history of the commotions of 1848, it might be thought by some that 'right to the wrong did yield.' But let it be observed, it is not abstract right alone which makes a case. Judgment, wisdom, the *practical character* of an affair, go a great way in determining events. The movement party were fanatics in their way, and men quickly began to feel that, to all appearance, the old governments were a lesser evil. In France, it was thought better to have a downright despotism. What justice dealt with in this instance was the folly of thinking that an improved state-system, antagonistic to that formerly existing, can be made up in a day out of totally new elements. The less fatal error of ruling by coercion was what the divine voice for the time sanctioned.

We have since then seen a monarch who had been spoiled by the circumstances in which he lived, venturing on a rash and wicked act, which he thought no one would dare to challenge. He miscalculated. Two great states declared war against him. Too proud to admit his error, he determined to sustain the shock. A year saw that proud and mighty man worn out with anxiety and toil, and only escaping by death from the humiliation which was in store for him and his Russias.

Modern Austria is a fanatic for order, as contradistinguished from all progression and all concern of

the people in their government. Considering what anarchy has sometimes done, she is not wholly without a plea in law; but the position is too extreme to be supported in these times. In working out her case, moreover, Austria has oppressed her dependencies, and acted as a tyrant over some of her neighbours. She has occasioned disturbance by her very love of order, and created danger by her excessive ardour for perfect security. In her system of procedure she has trusted wholly in military power to preserve for herself what cannot be rightly retained without the concurrence and good-will of men. She has disgusted more than her own subjects by calling in the aid of the papal power. It would have been all very well, perhaps, some centuries ago; but it does not suit our epoch. One might pretty safely say beforehand, that the stupidity of such a course would bring punishment, even if the horrible tyranny had nothing to do with the matter.

The events of May and June of the present year have given an award against a system so mistimed and so misplaced. Europe has seen with astonishment the largest and most carefully constructed military system in the world utterly fail before the Franco-Sardinian army. Austria had great material, great bravery, and, after all, a principle to fight for in her love of *l'ordre établi*. But she was where she had no true right to be. She was among a people who only could be kept under her rule by terror. She was falsifying her own purposes by the way in which she had to carry them out. All the moral force in the case was accordingly against her. She fought, not like an honest litigant, but like a criminal standing at bay. The sentiments of men seemed to form a very shower of arrows against her. Now, what was all this but the divine constitution of the world pronouncing that the wrong cannot be kept up for ever, that the right must sooner or later have the ascendancy? God allows the tyrant and the fool a most liberal latitude wherein to play their parts; but when they have fairly exhausted a long-suffering mercy, the crushing declaration is trumpeted forth at last, that the day of vengeance has come.

History has been disrespectfully spoken of in our time as an old almanac; but, if men would read her pages with a true intelligence, they might extract from them many good lessons. Just as common observation pronounces that, in private life, honesty, industry, and a just economy are usually followed by some share of the world's wealth and comfort, so does history tell us that sound and just political action usually prospers. The statesman and the statesystem which cultivate only self-will and selfishness, which prove insensible to the demands of the times, which seek by cruelty to defend iniquity, appear in history just as sure of punishment as we all know common roguery to be. Prejudice and all kinds of shallownesses forbid us sometimes to see that it is so; but the power of reading the great record aright is constantly improving, and even now nations are taking her warnings. For example, in the event of a great dependency expressing discontents like those of the Anglo-American colonists of 1775, we should not now act as did the government of George III. in that unfortunate year. Warned by the fatal consequences which attended our interference with France in 1793, we now allow her to make what changes in her government she pleases, and receive every new one with like respect, thus preserving her friendship, and keeping at peace, instead of incurring the evils of endless and exhausting contests. It does appear

as if a reference to former decisions would ere long save mankind from many disputes which nothing but a sanguinary suit could formerly have settled.

SOMETHING LIKE A CONJUROR.

ALTHOUGH we are accustomed to speak of an unwise man as being 'no conjuror,' it is certain that we do not hold the art of Prestidigitation very highly. Notwithstanding that that calling boasts of its *Professors*—if not of its *Professorships*—it has not hitherto been reckoned by us among the respectable walks of life; nor would Paterfamilias be satisfied with a son who chose it, even though Fortune had blessed the lad with sharpest eyes and swiftest fingers, and Sleight-of-hand had marked him for her own. M. Robert, the skilful watchmaker of Blois, was quite of his opinion in this matter, and opposed his own youthful offspring's views in this unorthodox direction with affectionate firmness. At eight years old, this lad, brought up in a home which might almost be called artistic, was quite an accomplished mechanician. In his play-hours, while at school, he constructed a charming open cage, in which was fixed miniature gymnastic machinery, kept in motion by the little prisoners whom he had previously captured in the mouse-traps of his devising. They raised the water for their own drinking by means of a pump which he had made almost entirely of quills. Engineering was indeed a passion with him always, although he gave it up—except occasionally—when he devoted himself to the more serious pursuits of Conjuror and Prestidigitation. His life-long devotion to the latter sciences he attributed to the simple incident of a bookseller having sent him two volumes of *Scientific Amusements*, instead of Berthard's *Treatise on Clockmaking*. 'How often,' says he, 'have I since blessed this providential error, without which I should have probably vegetated as a country watchmaker! My life would have been spent in gentle monotony; I should have been spared many emotions, sufferings, and shocks; but, on the other hand, what lively sensations, what profound delight would have been sacrificed!' So that it would seem—since this reflection is made in comparative old age, after the acquisition of a great reputation and more than a competency—that Paterfamilias was wrong in this particular case; as indeed he generally is when he has to do with the genius, the Exceptional Boy, such as, without doubt, young Robert was.

In less than one month, by aid of this accidental volume, and the practical instruction of a certain corn-cutter, who had a talent for legerdemain, he could juggle with no less than four balls at once; nay, could place a book before him, and read it without any hesitation while the balls were in the air.

But let it not be imagined that the top of any profession, however *outré*, is to be attained by mere natural aptitude, without application and diligence. 'When you have read my volume,' says Robert Houdin, 'you will know how a magician is produced, and will learn that the tree whence my magic staff was cut was only that of persevering labour, often bedewed by the sweat of my brow.'

Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that this most successful Prestidigitateur of perhaps any age—no charlatan, such as Cagliostro and his followers, but an open and unpretending professor of the Art of Deception—did meet with great opportunities in his early life. Having fallen from a diligence, he is picked up half-dead on the roadside, by a celebrated conjuror, called Torriano, who adopts him and teaches

* *Memoirs of Robert Houdin, Ambassador, Author, and Conjuror.* Written by Himself. Chapman and Hall.

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him his trade. The history of this man is wonderful, even to melodrama, and tempts us much by its singularity; but we have quotations enough to make from the experience of our own magician. We will merely state that Torriano has the misfortune to shoot his only son dead upon his own stage, while they were performing the 'apple-scene' in *William Tell*.

M. Robert, while still young, married Mademoiselle Houdin, whose name, affixed to his own, has become so familiar to us; and by the advice of her father, who was also a mechanician, set about studying the science of automata-making, as subservient to his intended calling of a juggler. Among other ingenious pieces of mechanism which he makes a point of examining, he sees the famous Automaton Chess-player, which in its time had beaten half the sovereigns of Europe. It now appears that at the bottom of this mystery there was concealed a living man—one of very extraordinary history. Worosky was a Russian officer who had headed a revolt, and only escaped from the scene of its suppression with a pair of broken thighs. Cured with the loss of both limbs by a kind-hearted Dr Osloff, he fell under the notice of a friend of that person, a M. de Kempelin, a Viennese mechanician, who contrived what would at once obtain Worosky's escape out of the country, save Osloff from the consequences of his humane interference, and furnish a future means of living for the former. He constructed a piece of mechanism, in which Worosky's extraordinary talents for chess-playing should be taken advantage of. 'The automaton represented a Turk of the natural size, wearing the national costume, and seated behind a box of the shape of a chest of drawers. In the middle of the top of the box was a chess-board. Prior to commencing the game, the artist opened several doors in the chest, and M. Osloff could see inside a large number of wheels, pulleys, cylinders, springs, &c., occupying the larger part. At the same time, he opened a long drawer, from which he produced the chessmen, and a cushion, on which the Turk was to rest his arm. This examination ended, the robe of the automaton was raised, and the interior of the body could also be inspected. The doors being then closed, M. de Kempelin wound up one of the wheels with a key he inserted in a hole in the chest; after which the Turk, with a gentle nod of salutation, placed his hand on one of the pieces, raised it, deposited it on another square, and laid his arm on the cushion before him. The inventor had stated that, as the automaton could not speak, it would signify check to the king by three nods, and to the queen by two.

'The doctor moved in his turn, and waited patiently till his adversary, whose movements had all the dignity of the sultan he represented, had moved. The game, though slow at first, soon grew animated, and the doctor found he had to deal with a tremendous opponent; for, in spite of all his efforts to defeat the figure, his game was growing quite desperate. It is true, though, that for some minutes past the doctor's attention had appeared to be distracted, and one idea seemed to occupy him. But while hesitating whether he should impart his thoughts to his friend, the figure gave three nods. The game was over.

"By Jove!" the loser said, with a tinge of vexation, which the sight of the inventor's smiling face soon dispelled, "if I were not certain Worosky is at this moment in bed, I should believe I had been playing with him. His head alone is capable of inventing such a check-mate. And, besides," the doctor said, looking fixedly at M. de Kempelin, "can you tell me why your automaton plays with the left hand, just like Worosky?"

This peculiarity has always been attributed to the

carelessness of the constructor, and M. Osloff was of the same opinion, until Kempelin raised the robe of the Turk, and displayed the poor cripple stowed away in its body, having crept thither after the inspection of the automaton by the spectator, and while the box and machinery were being examined. The three friends were the more delighted as the instrument promised to furnish Worosky with a mode of escape out of the Russian dominions, as well as to assure him a livelihood. That very evening, their plans were arranged; and in order to arouse no suspicion, performances were to be given in all the towns through which they passed. These exhibitions were only too successful, and the Empress Catharine, excited by the wonderful report of them, insisted upon having the automaton at the palace. The unfortunate rebel, upon whose head she had set so many rubles, was obliged to obey, although it took himself and caravan no less than fifteen days to travel from Vitebsk to St Petersburg; and the match with the empress herself came off before the court.

'The skilful Mussulman captured a bishop and a knight, and the game was turning much to the disadvantage of the lady, when the Turk, suddenly forgetting his dignified gravity, gave a violent blow on his cushion, and pushed back a piece his adversary had just moved. Catharine II. had attempted to cheat; perhaps to try the skill of the automaton, or for some other reason. At any rate, the haughty empress, unwilling to confess her weakness, replaced the piece on the same square, and regarded the automaton with an air of imperious authority. The result was most unexpected—the Turk upset all the pieces with a blow of his hand, and immediately the clock-work, which had been heard during the whole game, stopped. It seemed as if the machinery had got out of repair. Pale and trembling, M. de Kempelin, recognising in this Worosky's impetuous temper, awaited the issue of this conflict between the insurgent and his sovereign.

"Ah, ah, my good automaton, your manners are rather rough," the empress said, good-humouredly, not sorry to see a game she had small chance of winning end thus. "Oh, you are a famous player, I grant; but you were afraid of losing the game, and so prudently upset the pieces. Well, I am now quite convinced of your skill and your violent character."

And thus poor Worosky, who had lost so many limbs, managed at last to preserve his head.

The escape of our own hero, Robert Houdin, from poverty and ruin was scarcely less remarkable. Although he had produced the 'alarm-light'—which woke you and lit a candle simultaneously—and other popular and useful mechanical contrivances, he straightway invested all his earnings in theatrical automata, which gave him no immediate return, and so he grew poorer and poorer daily. At last he had a sum of 2000 francs to pay at the month's end, and not a penny to meet it. At this crisis, he found a M. C——, a rich curiosity-dealer, to buy from him, for the sum of 5000 francs, 'a writing and drawing automaton,' which was as yet only a conception in M. Houdin's brain. Upon this the mechanician took a determination which, in the case of any but a poor conjuror, would be well-nigh called heroic.

'Paris not appearing to me a secure place against annoyance, I chose the suburbs as my retreat; and one fine day, despite the prayers and supplications of my whole family, after intrusting my business to one of my workmen, whose talent and probity I was convinced of, I proceeded to Belleville, and installed myself in a little room in the Rue des Bois, which I hired for twelve months at a hundred francs. The only furniture was a bed, a chest of drawers, a table, and a few chairs. This act of my madness, as my friends called it, or this heroic determination, as I

called it, saved me from imminent ruin, and was my first step on the ladder of success. From this moment, an obstinate will was aroused in me, which enabled me to confront many obstacles and difficulties.

'I am bound to confess that the first days of my retirement were painful, and I bitterly deplored the harsh necessity that thus isolated me from all I loved. The society of my wife and children had grown a necessity to me; a kiss from these dear beings restored my courage in hours of despondency, and now I was deprived of it. Surely I must have been supported by an enormous strength of will not to turn back at the prospect of this frightful vacuum. Many times I furtively wiped away a tear, but then I closed my eyes, and straightway my automaton and the various combinations that were to animate it appeared before me like a consoling vision; I passed in review all the wheels I had created; I smiled upon them like so many children of my own; and when I emerged from this restorative dream, I set to work again, filled with a courageous resignation. . . . I had been now living more than a year at Belleville, and I saw with extreme pleasure the end of my task and of my exile drawing near. After many doubts as to the success of my enterprise, the solemn moment arrived when I should make the first trial of my writer. I had spent the whole day in giving the last touches to my automaton, which sat before me as if awaiting my orders, and prepared to answer the questions I asked it. I had only to press the spring in order to enjoy the long awaited result. My heart beat violently, and though I was alone, I trembled with emotion at the mere thought of this imposing trial. I had just laid the first sheet of paper before my writer, and asked him this question, "Who is the author of your being?"

'I pressed the spring, and the clock-work began acting. I dared hardly breathe, through fear of disturbing the operations. The automaton bowed to me, and I could not refrain from smiling on it as on my son; but when I saw the eyes fix an attentive glance on the paper—when the arm a few seconds numb and lifeless, began to move and trace my signature in a firm handwriting—the tears started to my eyes, and I fervently thanked Heaven for granting me such success. And it was not alone the satisfaction I experienced as inventor, but the certainty I had of being able to restore some degree of comfort to my family, that caused my deep feeling of gratitude. After making my *Sosia* repeat my signature a thousand times, I gave it this next question: "What o'clock is it?" The automaton, acting in obedience to a clock, wrote: "It is two in the morning." This was a very timely warning: I profited by it, and went straight to bed. Against my expectations, I enjoyed a sleep I had not known for a long time.'

We now come to the description of that part of M. Robert Houdin's life with which most of us are more or less acquainted. The wonderful exhibition which he was wont to call 'second-sight,' played off by himself and his son, was effected, it seems, in the following fashion. A secret and unnoticeable correspondence existed between the two, so that the father could announce to the well-blinded boy the name, nature, and bulk of any object handed to him by the spectators; nay, it may be almost said of *all* objects, since, aided by excellent memories, the pair had managed to classify in their heads every article which could possibly be offered to them. This was absolutely necessary, for before going to witness the last's performance, a council was often held at the spectator's homes, where some object to embarrass the conjuror was decided upon. Among these were half-effaced antique medals, minerals, books printed in languages and characters of every description, coats of arms,

microscopic objects, &c. They learned, therefore, how to describe all these; they got up the names of every surgical instrument; they learned every foreign alphabet of dead and living tongues; they studied antiquities and curiosities. Moreover, they could both detect, at one glance, almost every article of furniture or ornament in any apartment, an art which lessened many of their difficulties, and which they thus acquired.

'In order to make my young assistant understand the nature of the exercise we were going to learn, I took a domino, the cinq-quater for instance, and laid it before him. Instead of letting him count the points of the two numbers, I requested the boy to tell me the total at once. "Nine," he said. Then I added another domino, the quater-tray. "That makes sixteen," he said, without any hesitation. I stopped the first lesson here. The next day we succeeded in counting at a single glance four dominoes; the day after, six; and thus we were at length enabled to give instantaneously the product of a dozen dominoes. This result obtained, we applied ourselves to a far more difficult task, over which we spent a month. My son and I passed rapidly before a toy-shop, or any other displaying a variety of wares, and cast an attentive glance upon it. A few steps further on, we drew paper and pencil from our pockets, and tried which could describe the greater number of objects seen in passing. I must own that my son reached a perfection far greater than mine, for he could often write down forty objects, while I could scarcely reach thirty. Often feeling vexed at this defeat, I would return to the shop and verify his statement, but he rarely made a mistake.'

Upon his interviews with monarchs, and intimacies with the mighty of the earth, it is not our purpose to dwell; since, although they have doubtless an interest of their own, they belong rather to the advertisement side of our author's sheets, and interrupt that most useful and undesigned moral which they convey. It would perhaps have been impossible in this country for a peripatetic conjuror, however able, to have been employed quasi-politically, as was M. Robert Houdin by the French government; but we cannot but think that his diplomacy was at least equal in merit, as it was decidedly superior in success, to that which our own professionals have been recently exhibiting in that line. It was necessary that the pernicious influence of the marabouts—the false prophets and pretended sorcerers of Algiers—should be destroyed, and their tricks exposed to the Arabs; and after repeated invitations, M. Houdin accepted, in 1851, that delicate mission.

After having very exceedingly 'astonished the natives' throughout his first performance, which the chiefs had received 'commands' from the government to attend, he determined to close it with a really 'startling effect.'

'For my last trick, I required the assistance of an Arab. At the request of several interpreters, a young Moor, about twenty years of age, tall, well-built, and richly dressed, consented to come on the stage. Bolder and more civilised, doubtlessly, than his comrades of the plains, he walked firmly up to me. I drew him towards the table that was in the centre of the stage, and pointed out to him and to the other spectators that it was slightly built and perfectly isolated; after which, without further preface, I told him to mount upon it, and covered him with an enormous cloth-cone, open at the top. Then, drawing the cone and its contents on to a plank, the ends of which were held by my servant and myself, we walked to the footlights with our heavy burden, and upset it. The Moor had disappeared—the cone was perfectly empty! Immediately there began a spectacle which I shall never forget. The Arabs were so affected by this last trick,

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that, impelled by an irresistible feeling of terror, they rose in all parts of the house, and yielded to the influence of a general panic. To tell the truth, the crowd of fugitives was densest at the door of the dress-circle, and it could be seen, from the agility and confusion of these high dignitaries, that they were the first to wish to leave the house. Vainly did one of them, the *caïd* of the Beni-Salah, more courageous than his colleagues, try to restrain them by his words: "Stay! stay! we cannot thus lose one of our co-religionists. Surely we must know what has become of him, or what has been done to him. Stay! stay!" But the co-religionists only ran away the faster, and soon the courageous *caïd*, led away by their example, followed them. They little knew what awaited them at the door of the theatre; but they had scarcely gone down the steps when they found themselves face to face with the "resuscitated Moor." The first movement of terror overcome, they surrounded the man, felt and cross-questioned him; but, annoyed by these repeated questions, he had no better resource than to escape at full speed.

The blow was struck. Thenceforward, the interpreters, and all those who had dealings with the Arabs, received orders to make them understand that his pretended miracles were only the result of skill, inspired and guided by an art called *prestidigitation*, in no way connected with sorcery. The ambassador (most) extraordinary was now furnished with military protection, and made the tour of the provinces. He was everywhere received with great rapture and immense respect, being indeed taken for 'Shaitan,' or the devil, and treated and addressed accordingly. Only the marabouts stood out against him, and like some other professors we have heard of, underrated that art which they themselves practised with such inferior success. Once, indeed, our conjuror's reputation was put somewhat dangerously to the proof, and only saved by his own consummate presence of mind. A certain marabout being driven to the verge of madness by this rival's successful performances, addressed him, before a native assembly, with this perplexing proposition:

"I now believe in your supernatural power," he said; "you are a real sorcerer; hence, I hope you will not fear to repeat here a trick you performed in your theatre;" and offering me two pistols he held concealed beneath his burnous, he added: "Come, choose one of these pistols; we will load it, and I will fire at you. You have nothing to fear, as you can ward off all blows." I confess I was for a moment staggered; I sought a subterfuge, and found none. All eyes were fixed upon me, and a reply was anxiously awaited. The marabout was triumphant. Bou-Allem, being aware that my tricks were only the result of skill, was angry that his guest should be so pestered; hence he began reproaching the marabout. I stopped him, however, for an idea had occurred to me which would save me from my dilemma, at least temporarily; then, addressing my adversary: "You are aware," I said, with assurance, "that I require a talisman in order to be invulnerable, and, unfortunately, I have left mine at Algiers." The marabout began laughing with an incredulous air. "Still," I continued, "I can, by remaining six hours at prayers, do without a talisman, and defy your weapon. To-morrow morning, at eight o'clock, I will allow you to fire at me in the presence of these Arabs, who were witnesses of your challenge." Bou-Allem, astonished at such a promise, asked me once again if this offer were serious, and if he should invite the company for the appointed hour. On my affirmative, they agreed to meet before the stone bench I have already alluded to. I did not spend my night at prayers, as may be supposed, but I employed about two hours in insuring my invulnerability; then, satisfied with the result, I slept

soundly, for I was terribly tired. By eight the next morning we had breakfasted, our horses were saddled, and our escort was awaiting the signal for our departure, which would take place after the famous experiment. None of the guests were absent, and, indeed, a great number of Arabs came in to swell the crowd. The pistols were handed me; I called attention to the fact that the vents were clear, and the marabout put in a fair charge of powder, and drove the wad home. Among the bullets produced, I chose one which I openly put in the pistol, and which was then also covered with paper. The Arab watched all these movements, for his honour was at stake. We went through the same process with the second pistol, and the solemn moment arrived. Solemn, indeed, it seemed to everybody—to the spectators, who were uncertain of the issue; to Madame Houdin, who had in vain besought me to give up this trick, for she feared the result; and solemn also to me, for as my new trick did not depend on any of the arrangements made at Algiers, I feared an error, an act of treachery—I knew not what. Still, I posted myself at fifteen paces from the sheik, without evincing the slightest emotion. The marabout immediately seized one of the pistols, and, on my giving the signal, took a deliberate aim at me. The pistol went off, and the ball appeared between my teeth. More angry than ever, my rival tried to seize the other pistol, but I succeeded in reaching it before him. "You could not injure me," I said to him; "but you shall now see that my aim is more dangerous than yours. Look at that wall." I pulled the trigger, and on the newly white-washed wall appeared a large patch of blood, exactly at the spot where I had aimed. The marabout went up to it, dipped his finger in the blood, and, raising it to his mouth, convinced himself of the reality. When he acquired this certainty, his arms fell, and his head was bowed on his chest, as if he were annihilated. It was evident that for the moment he doubted everything, even the Prophet.

We thus conclude, after our author's own fashion, with perhaps the most striking performance in his *répertoire*, nor will we detract from the interest of his volumes by telling our readers by what simple means it was effected.

M. Robert Houdin would scarcely pardon us, for he is justly proud of his skill in science, if we omitted to state that the Exhibition of 1844 conferred upon him a medal for the construction of automata, and the Universal Exhibition a reward for several new applications of electricity to mechanism. Nevertheless, this Prince of Prestidigitation reserved always his best homage for his peculiar art; and while fully acknowledging, as we have seen, the value of ingenious application, regretted, doubtless, that Watt and Stephenson did not exhibit, like himself, upon a platform; and looked upon the accomplished Babbage as a conjuror spoiled.

LABYRINTHS.

THE human mind has a constant yearning after mystery, and in the attempt to unravel it, finds no ordinary measure of gratification. So much is this the case, that even when mysteries do not lie in our way, we do not scruple to invent or construct them.

Something of the same tendency appears in the construction of those gigantic labyrinths, or architectural intricacies, the accounts of which, by Herodotus and others, fill us with wonder, which would be incredulity, had not traces of the works they speak of been identified by travellers even of the present day.

The immediate or literal design of the labyrinth is sufficiently indicated by the etymology of the word; it is derived from the Greek word signifying 'to take'—referring to the fact that they were so constructed

as to render egress from them so difficult as to amount almost to an impossibility. They were thus, in a manner, colossal traps, or architectural net-work, which retained all that ventured within them. They could scarcely adopt as their motto, *nulla vestigia retrorsum*—but this was their aim, and their all but invariable result.

By far the most extensive structure of this kind, and in many respects also the most interesting, was that of ancient Egypt, which has been minutely described by Herodotus, as well as referred to more generally by Strabo, Pliny, and other writers. It was situated on the shores of Lake Mæris, although there is considerable difference of opinion on this point. According to Herodotus, it was placed near the City of Crocodiles, now better known as Arsinoë, or the Medinet-el-Faioum. Its dimensions and arrangements generally, as given by this historian, are such as to excite our admiration and wonder; even the Pyramids are represented as dwarfed in comparison. 'It is composed,' he says, 'of twelve courts, all of which are covered; their entrances are opposite to each other; six to the north, and six to the south; one wall encloses the whole; the apartments are of two kinds; there are fifteen hundred above ground, and as many beneath; in all three thousand.' He tells us that he was permitted to examine those above ground, and that he considered them as among the greatest triumphs of human industry and art. The winding passages from court to court seemed infinite in number, and the same is observed of the smaller chambers, opening at every turn into spacious and magnificent courts. The ceilings and walls were all of marble, and enriched by a vast variety of sculpture; while pillars of the same material, the whitest and most polished in the world, ran round the courts from end to end.

The subterranean part of this gigantic structure was jealously guarded from public gaze, being reserved for the preservation of the sacred crocodiles and the bodies of the kings by whom the labyrinth was built. The more minute account thus given by Herodotus receives considerable confirmation from the allusions made to it by other writers. According to Strabo, the passages and chambers were so artfully contrived, that it was impossible for any one to enter it and retrace his steps without a guide; while Pliny assures us that it was well worthy of the opinion so universally prevalent with regard to it.

With regard to the origin of such works, we must no doubt have recourse to the two great elements of ambition and superstition, which often, indeed, in such cases, work into each other's hands, and which have had no small share in prompting great human efforts in all ages and countries. Herodotus informs us that the labyrinth was built by the twelve kings who at that time reigned over Egypt, and whose desire was to leave a monument worthy of their renown; but there is nothing incompatible in linking with this the prevailing belief respecting the return of the spirit to the body after a lapse of ages, leading, as it naturally did, to the careful and sumptuous preservation of that body, first by embalming, and then by securing it in mausoleums of royal magnificence and adamant strength.

The labyrinth of Crete takes the next place, although the very fact of its connection with the name of Dædalus invests it with a more mythic character. It receives prominent notice in classical antiquity, connected as it is with the unnatural passion of Pasiphaë and her monstrous progeny, the Minotaur. Dædalus himself was confined in it for a time by Minos, in consequence of his abetting the desires of the queen. It was here that this fabulous hero made wings of feathers and wax for himself and his son Icarus, who was his companion

in prison; trusting to which, they took their flight through the air from Crete, with a result that is familiar to every student of Lemprier's Classical Dictionary. Such was the architect, and, in the first instance, the hero, of the labyrinth of Crete. It was afterwards made the prison of the Minotaur, where Athenian youth of both sexes were devoured by that monster—this tribute being exacted continually by Minos. At length the lot fell upon Theseus, who, however, being furnished with a clue by Ariadne, the daughter of Minos, was enabled to achieve the destruction of the monster, and to escape unhurt from the windings of the labyrinth, thus proving the deliverer of his country, and surrounding himself with a heroic fame.

So much for the mythical traditions of the place; but when we endeavour to pass into the clearer light of history, we find little indeed to gratify our curiosity, for, as it often happens when the mythic oracle is loud, the historic one is mute; the two voices are seldom heard together, and it is always a matter of suspicion when the former dogmatizes with a shrill pipe and in unhesitating tones. Fiction seizes its opportunity when Truth is not at hand to correct or control.

The historic notices of this labyrinth are few and unsatisfactory. Diodorus and Pliny speak of it indeed, but the former only as a matter of conjecture. It is supposed by them to have been constructed on the model of the Egyptian one, though inferior in scale. The Abbé Barthelemy maintains that it was no more than a huge excavation or quarried cavern. The historians previously referred to tell us that there were no traces of it in their day, although some of their contemporaries are said to have visited it. Possibly the contradiction may receive its explanation in the supposition that the Cretans, wishing to preserve the celebrity of the place, had given to this mythic nothing 'a local habitation and a name.' We know that this would only accord with the mark which apostolic authority has set upon them, the Cretans, as being 'always liars'—although it must be admitted that if such a weakness were to be taken as a stern test of veracity, Cretans in abundance would be found in every country under heaven.

The Lemnian labyrinth is the next structure of the kind to which antiquity points. The island of Lemnos is situated in the Ægean Sea, between the Trojan shore and Mount Athos. It was dedicated to Vulcan, and was supposed to have been the spot on which he alighted, when precipitated from heaven by the king of gods and men.

The fact of the inhabitants being chiefly of the craft of blacksmiths, gave a sort of consistency to the legend, as well as an air of truthfulness to the poetic myth which fixed in this island the forges of Vulcan. The labyrinth was said to have been even more splendid than that of Egypt or Crete, although it must be confessed that time has left very little by which to substantiate such a statement. Pliny affects to give some description of it, and asserts that there were some remains of it in his day. According to this writer, it had a hundred and forty columns of marble, 'all wrought round by turners' craft.' It had also massive gates and numerous statues, which imparted to it a rich and imposing appearance. The merit of devising and constructing it is divided among three otherwise unknown names—Zmilus, Rholus, and Theodoros. Dr Hunt and Professor Carlyle sought in vain for any traces of this edifice; and while it might be going too far to deny that it ever existed, there seems to be good reason to conclude that the accounts are chargeable with very material exaggeration.

The fourth and last of these ancient structures was that in Italy, ascribed to Porsenna, king of Tuscan,

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who caused it to be built for his own sepulchre. 'King Porcenna,' says M. Varro, 'was interred under the city Elusium, in Tuscan, in which verie place he left a sumptuous monument or tombe, built all of square stone, within the base or foot, whereof he made a labyrinth so intricate, that if a man were entered into it, without a bottom or clue of thread in his hand, and leaving the one end thereof fastened to the entrie or dore, it was impossible that he should ever find the way out again.' He then proceeds with a minute description of the building, with its rows of pyramids, three tiers of which rose, one above another, into the air, to such a great elevation, that the narrator confesses himself ashamed to name the height to which they reached. The cost of this work seems to have been so great, and its utility so trifling, as to prompt some sage moralising on the part of the historian who undertakes to describe it. He speaks of the 'outrageous madness of the foolish prince' who sought such a worthless immortality at the expense of his subjects, and to the injury of his kingdom; and mentions, as a sad commentary on such forms of posthumous ambition, that the artificer 'who enterprised and finished the worke, went away with the greater part of the glorie.'

Although the word labyrinth chiefly points back to a more or less distant antiquity, it is not altogether unassociated with more modern times. In connection with that very equivocal and artificial taste which was introduced into the gardening of France and Holland, the labyrinth found a place as an amusing conceit, if not as a very tasteful ornament—an example of this may be seen at Versailles; while in our own country, specimens exist in Hampton Court Gardens, and in those of Trinity College, Oxford, besides less important follies of the kind throughout the kingdom.

The one most tenderly associated with English history was that of Woodstock, where once stood a royal palace, a favourite residence of several of the kings of England. It continued till the reign of Charles I., when it was allowed to fall into a state of ruin. Here resided the hapless mistress of Henry II., Fair Rosamond, the beautiful daughter of Lord Clifford. To protect her from the jealousy of Eleanor his queen, he kept her in a bower in the labyrinth of Woodstock, afterwards known as Rosamond's Bower. His precautions, however, were vain, as, by means of a clue of silk thread, the queen discovered her apartments, and succeeded in freeing herself of her rival by the expedient of poisoning. The remarkable beauty of the lady—her tender youth—her gentle and pensive disposition, together with her lonely life and tragic death, have all contributed to invest the 'Fair Rosamond' with a touching interest, and to make her story one of the most affecting episodes in our historic annals.

Although labyrinths, properly considered, are now a thing of the past, the word itself survives, somewhat phonetically descriptive of the idea it expresses. It has passed now almost into a mere figure of speech, and finds a fitting application in connection with all that is intricate and perplexing in the deep questions of philosophy or morals.

Mark how the labyrinthian turns they take,
The circles intricate, and mystic maze.

The idea was seemingly present to the mind of Milton, although the old English word is employed. When describing the occupation of some of the 'better sort' of the fallen 'powers,' he says:

Others apart sat on a hill retired,
In thoughts more elevate, and reason'd high
Of providence, fore-knowledge, will, and fate,
Fixed fate, free-will, fore-knowledge absolute,
And found no end in wandering mazes lost.

In this general sense, the word finds an extensive

and varied application; we talk of a labyrinthian style, a labyrinthian lawsuit, a labyrinthian oration, and such like. It is one of those cases in which the abstract idea survives in the word, long after its material substratum has disappeared; and thus reminds us not merely of the ductility of language, but of the readiness with which it is transferred from those material substances and forms with which it was originally connected, to the more subtle and impalpable ideas of the mind, with which these hold some perceptible analogy.

A ROMANCE THROUGH A BEDROOM WINDOW.

CHAPTER III.—LA GRANDE ARTISTE.

THE day following my midnight interview with M. Darron on the Grande Place, I received a note from him enclosing an order for the opera for that night. I need not say that I availed myself of it when the time arrived. The mystery that hung about the beautiful young singer and her strange home had so deepened of late, that I found myself unable to check the growing interest I felt in all that concerned her. Could it be that some terrible secret really clung to the inmates of that gloomy house? The light that burned there nightly, the apparition on the roof, and the fearful laughter I had heard, were more than enough to rouse suspicion. Was it possible that Josephine Darron, the great actress and singer, was a sleep-walker? or, worse still, the victim of a diseased mind? The idea was too horrible. And yet that same night, when she appeared before me on the stage, singing with a supernatural pathos, I seemed again to have before my eyes the very figure I had seen on the roof of the old house tossing its arms wildly to the sky.

The terrible fascination which this thought gave to every look and movement of the actress, I cannot describe. I left the theatre in a state of wretched excitement.

The next morning, I resolved to call on M. Darron, to thank him for the ticket. As I rang the bell at the door of the gloomy house, I looked up at the closed windows with many curious speculations. It was evident that there were no other tenants in the house, for all the lower floors were unoccupied, and the bell handles belonging to them were rusty. The door opened at length, and the masculine-looking woman with the gold ear-rings and high cap demanded my business with an air of grim surprise. Evidently hesitating as to the policy of the proceeding, she bade me walk in, locked the door again, and ushered me up a great flight of stone stairs. The noise of our footsteps, as we ascended, echoed drearily in the empty chambers we passed, and through the half-opened shutters of the staircase windows, dusty streaks of sunlight fell athwart our path. Marthe spoke not a word, but coughed a bass cough—of dissatisfaction, I thought—every time we reached a landing. At length we arrived on the fourth floor; and passing through a gloomy little anteroom, Marthe led me into a large cool-looking chamber, adorned with mirrors and dark furniture. An open piano stood in one corner, and sheets of manuscript music littered the chairs and floor. I could hear M. Darron's violin in an inner room. Marthe, who had all along eyed me with considerable suspicion, now bade me sit down, whilst she summoned her master. I remarked that the grim woman carried a great bunch of keys at her side, and unlocked and relocked all the doors with methodical care.

In two or three minutes, M. Darron appeared, wearing an old dressing-gown and shabby slippers, and carrying his violin in his hand. From the

coldness of his reception, I feared he considered my visit an intrusion. I proceeded to thank him for the great pleasure he had afforded me, and begged that Mademoiselle Josephine would accept the bouquet of flowers I had ventured to bring her; then, as I had nothing more to say, I sat in silence.

'You are very polite, monsieur, and my daughter will thank you.'

The old man took the flowers, and laid them on the piano; he then resumed his seat, and sat looking at me, as though he wished to know what other reason I had for coming there. As I was scarcely in a position to explain, I took refuge in some generality of conversation, only, however, to subside again into silence, for my host gave me no encouragement to proceed. How I should have fared, I know not, had not the door opened, and Mademoiselle Darron appeared at this crisis. She did not see me on entering; but, taking up the flowers from the piano, exclaimed: 'How kind of you, mon papa, to buy me these lovely flowers!' Then, perceiving me, she bowed with an air of surprise, and looked towards her father for an explanation.

'It is this English gentleman whom you must thank for your nosegay, Josephine. He has called, I believe, purposely to present it to you.'

Mademoiselle Darron thanked me, in a few simple words. From her unconstrained manner, it was evident that the presence of a stranger did not disturb her, as it did her father; or, it might be, that his embarrassment gave her self-possession; for, after an awkward pause, during which M. Darron drew a few plaintive notes from his violin, as he sat nervously caressing it, she led the conversation to my recent accident, and spoke of my long confinement to my room, of which her father had told her. Whilst mademoiselle expressed her sympathy in a most natural manner, and filled me with admiration of her grace and tact, I remarked how pale and worn she looked. Her eyes had a haggard expression that told of powers overtaxed, I thought. I could not have supposed that that gentle calmness of demeanour could have consisted with the fire and energy I had witnessed on the stage. There was something very charming in the simplicity and good sense that characterised all Mademoiselle Darron's remarks. Whilst our conversation was going on, I noticed that M. Darron remained silent, and I thought he watched his daughter with an anxious eye. When Josephine rose and left the room to seek a vase for the flowers, M. Darron crossed over and came and seated himself by my side.

'Sir, I know not what other motives you can have in seeking our acquaintance than those you have already assigned. I am content to believe in them. It rejoices me to see my daughter interested in anything or in any one. Her life is not so bright or gay as the life of a young person should be. Yet, monsieur, I regret to say that I cannot welcome you to my house as I should wish. My home is of necessity a quiet, a secluded one. Therefore, though I thank you, monsieur, for the friendly interest you testify, and beg you to continue it, you must pardon me for not returning the same after the manner of the world.'

His daughter entered, and he ceased speaking. Shortly after, I withdrew. Marthe reappeared to conduct me to the door, and again we went through the same process of locking and unlocking, until we reached the ground-floor, where my conductress grimly took leave of me.

During the week that followed, I made some little further advance in my acquaintance with my mysterious neighbours: I ventured to leave a basket of choice fruit one morning; on another, I carried mademoiselle some English books she had expressed a

wish to read; and M. Darron did not seem displeased at these attentions, although his nervousness and reserve of manner never wore off. One evening, when thanking me for some trifle or other, he suddenly exclaimed: 'Monsieur, I am glad of anything that will interest or rouse my daughter. Think you that she looks better, gayer than she did? Bah! how can you judge? I forget what I say;' and he proceeded rapidly to another subject.

I had now been one month in L—; I had recovered from my lameness, and dismissed my doctor, yet I felt loath to quit the place, and had made no plans for further travel. They were made for me, however, by others.

A letter from an old friend reached me at this time, informing me that, if I had any wish to see him again ere he left Europe, I must proceed to Marseille within three or four days, as he was just starting for the east. As he was one whom I valued highly, I did not hesitate for a moment, but resolved to quit L— at the end of two days. I was on my way to the post-office in the Rue du Bac to despatch my letter, when I caught sight of the words 'Darron,' 'sudden illness,' staring out of a large bill placarded on a wall: 'The sudden illness of Mademoiselle Darron compelled the manager to substitute another opera this evening, which he trusted would be,' &c.

I had seen mademoiselle only the day before, and had already taken a place for that night. I turned my back on the theatre, and wandered away to the outskirts of the town.

There were some pleasant fields by the river-side, where I had often lounged away an idle hour; I sought them now, and sat down on the grassy slope. Near at hand were some women washing their linen in the stream, and I could hear the measured thump, thump, as they beat their clothes upon the stones, and, now and then, their voices as they hailed some sunburnt fisherman returning up the river in the golden light. I sat drowsily watching the chips and straws float by—drowsily listening to the thump, thump of the washerwomen—drowsily conscious of the people passing along the footpath behind me.

It was growing dusk when I noticed the figure of an old man standing close to the water's edge, a few yards from where I lay. He was looking steadily at the stream, and leaned on his stick, as if in meditation. It was M. Darron. Surprised to see him there, when his daughter was lying ill, I rose and approached him. He started back when I spoke, but, upon recognising me, recovered his composure.

'Yes, monsieur, my poor Josephine is ill—very ill. She tells me she will soon be well again; but her illness is not one that is soon cured, I fear;' and he sighed heavily, and shook his head.

I was uttering some words of hope, when M. Darron turned round to me with a warmth of manner I had never seen in him before.

'Monsieur, you know what my daughter, my Josephine, is to me; you know how God has gifted her: figure, then, what I suffer to see her pining away—dying before my eyes! And so young—so young!'

His voice shook, and he stopped. M. Darron was in a mood unlike any I had ever beheld him in. Whether it was that the twilight did away with his natural reserve, or that an uncontrollable desire to pour out his sorrows into some friendly ear had seized him, I know not; but we sat down upon the bank, and he talked to me as though I had been the friend of years. His revelation ran thus:

Josephine, his idolised daughter, was dying of a broken heart. Though she appeared before the world full of the energy of genius, and could arouse the emotions of an audience at her will, she was sinking under a malady 'which was slowly devouring her

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life,' as M. Darron expressed it. Three years ago, her hand had been sought by a young officer who had been brought up in the same place—a town on the German frontiers—where her own youth was passed. He had studied the violin under M. Darron, and of all his pupils, was the one the old music-master most favoured. But, in spite of his regard for Fabien de Moléon, M. Darron shewed small favour to his suit. He had other views for his daughter. His ambition was to see her 'grande artiste,' as he said; and he was looking forward to the day when the hopes of a lifetime would be repaid in the fame of his child. Moreover, Fabien de Moléon was of a poor but noble family; and when Madame de Moléon, his mother, heard of the attachment he had formed for the daughter of his music-master, she determined to leave no means untried to break it off. Threats and caresses were tried in vain. The young lieutenant declared his love to be unalterable. So Madame de Moléon resolved to trust to the pride and generosity of Josephine, to liberate her son from his engagement. In a secret visit to the music-master's daughter, she represented to her how her son's prospects in life would be ruined by such an alliance; how he would incur the enmity of all his friends; and how the best proof of her love for him would be shewn in putting an end to their engagement at once. The appeal to the girl's dignity and affection was not in vain; Josephine renounced her lover, and believed she had done right. Had she known what a cruel stab she was inflicting on a heart that beat only for her, she could not have carried out her sacrifice. De Moléon wrote her one letter which she had carried ever since in her bosom, as the poor penitent wears the shirt of hair to scourge his guilty flesh. It lay there burning out her heart, for its words were heated with the scorn and indignation of him whom she loved best in the world. De Moléon returned to her all her gifts and letters, and left home suddenly, cutting off all traces to his retreat. From that hour, Josephine Darron devoted herself to her art with the whole energy of her nature. 'And now I have gained my wish!' continued the old man bitterly. 'She has earned the fame I coveted; but her heart is breaking. Fools—fools that we are! What need had I to change my name, and assume that of Darron, in order to elude De Moléon's pursuit! I would give all I have could I now recall him to my feet.'

Such was the story confided to my ears by the old man's trembling lips as we sat by the river-side in the deepening twilight. I parted with M. Darron at the door of my hotel, and retired to my room, pondering on the history I had heard. As yet, I felt I had not fully fathomed the mystery of that household; M. Darron, I feared, had concealed from me the worst calamity—the one more terrible than death, that threatened his daughter.

The next day, I felt sure it would not be regarded as an intrusion were I to call and inquire after Mademoiselle Darron's health. I had already noticed several inquirers at the door; for, in spite of their secluded habits, the residence of the popular singer was becoming known. Marthe, I observed, gave prompt replies, but admitted none. For myself, I augured an exception would be permitted.

But when I presented myself to the grim custodian, she replied in a surly way that 'she was not sure whether her master was at home—thought he *wouldn't* see me—could I leave a message instead?' And evidently against her will, and with a very bad grace, at last allowed me to enter.

'Yes, ma'mselle was still ill,' she replied, in answer to my inquiries as we ascended the stairs. 'No, she didn't quit her room—couldn't say whether she was better than she was yesterday.' Here all further inquiries were put an end to by a violent fit

of coughing which seized Marthe just as we reached the second landing. By the time it had subsided, we had reached the fourth floor.

'Enter, monsieur,' said Marthe, throwing open a door, and pointing forward with a stalwart arm.

It was the anteroom I have before mentioned—a dark, gloomy little chamber, with doors on either side communicating with other apartments. Near one of these doors stood a large folding-screen, which added to the sombre aspect of the room. Marching across the polished floor before me, Marthe suddenly stopped. 'Peste! where have I put my keys, then?' she exclaimed, making active search for the same. 'Ah, mule's head, I must have left them below. In two minutes, monsieur, I will return;' and she hurried down stairs with rapid steps.

But the two minutes expired, and Marthe returned not; the keys were not forthcoming, it appeared. I stood listening for the sound of her returning footsteps on the stairs, when I suddenly heard a strange noise in the room: it seemed like the breathing of an animal, and came, I thought, from behind the screen. I listened: all was still. No; there it was again—a heavy, measured respiration, close at hand. I could not describe the strange fear that crept over me at the sound. I stood rooted to the ground. The next moment, the screen trembled from top to bottom, and a wild figure rushed out from behind it, and stood staring at me with shining eyes. Good Heaven, it was Josephine Darron!

'Hush!' she whispered, placing her finger to her lips—'Hush! They don't know. See here!'

She held up Marthe's great bunch of keys, and looked at me with a fearful idiotic smile.

'Ah, ah! you won't tell?' She jingled the bunch of keys, darted through the side-door near her, and, flinging herself on the floor of the adjoining room, burst into a loud, mad shriek of laughter.

Had I come suddenly upon her dead body lying in the room, it would not have filled me with such horror. There, grovelling on the floor in idiotic mirth, lay that beautiful and gifted girl—lay there, babbling, stricken, mad! I cast one glance at the unhappy creature, felt a sudden sense of suffocation seize me, and hastened rapidly from the room.

I have some recollection of passing Marthe rushing up the stairs, and of finding the street-door wide open, but I remember nothing clearly for the first few minutes after I had made this terrible discovery. I hastened rapidly through the streets; and when at last I stopped, found myself in a narrow road outside of the city, shaded by some lofty trees growing in the garden of an old monastery. I sat down upon a stone by the monastery wall, and paused a while to think.

Horrible realisation of my worst fears! Josephine Darron was mad. There was something so appalling in the idea, that I tried to explain it away. Could I have been deceived? Had not my fancy cheated me in that dark chamber? No, it was useless. I could not reject the evidence of my senses. I recollected even that the very dress of that stricken creature was the one Mademoiselle Darron always wore—the pale gray stuff. It was she, and none else. When at last I returned to my hotel, I do not think I cast another glance at the house that contained that terrible secret; the whole place had become intolerable to me. The next morning, I quitted L—, and bade farewell to my old chamber under the roof where I had viewed the first scenes of this strange drama, yet to be played out before my eyes.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CATASTROPHE.

Arrived at Marseille, I found that all the distractions of travel and new scenes, powerfully as they

influenced me, were unable to drive away the recollection of the old house on the Grande Place of L— and its inmates. At night, I saw in my dreams the light burning in the casement; by day, I heard that fearful laughter ring in my ears. Even when I stood in the midst of a busy street or on a crowded quay, I would start at the sound; and my friend rallied me for having grown nervous with my confinement to my room.

Ere long, the day came when I grasped this friend's hand for the last time, and saw him recede from my eyes, waving his hat and shouting an English cheer, on the deck of the great ship steaming out for Alexandria. I stood there, watching the vessel till it had cleared the port, and passed out into the dazzling sheen of waters lying without the harbour. All day long, I wandered about the quays, idling amongst the various groups, and gazing out, ever and anon, on the horizon down which the outward-bound vessel had dropped, and left a whole sea between us. At sunset, I was still there, looking out upon what, a few hours since, had been a mere speck upon the waters, but was now a noble ship, close upon the harbour. It was a government transport, bringing home troops from Algiers, I was told. I watched the landing of the bronzed warriors, and all the bustle consequent on their debarkation, and then made my way home to the hotel, stopping at the *bureau des diligences*, on the way, to secure a place back to Paris for the morrow.

When I reached the diligence-office next morning, I found that the place I had taken in the *coupé* was already occupied. Coolly installed in the seat for which I had paid my francs overnight, sat a dark, sunburnt officer. Remonstrating on this usurpation, and determined to have either the seat I had taken, or none, I quickly found myself involved in a noisy altercation with the officials of the bureau.

'Monsieur's seat was on the *banquette*.' 'All the places for the interior had been taken twenty-four hours ago.' 'Monsieur deceived himself; he could not have taken that seat last night; it was impossible.'

But monsieur was determined to prove it otherwise. It was evidently a conspiracy on the part of the bureau to shew favour to a 'brave militaire'—who, from the attention shewn him, was probably an officer returned from Algeria by the *Duc de Joinville* last night—at the expense of a stranger. To what lengths the mendacity of my opponents would have carried me, I dare not conjecture. I had my hand on my carpet-bag, and was on the point of pitching it at the chief *commis*, when the officer put his head out of the window, and begged to know what was the matter. No sooner had he heard, than he alighted, and requested to see the way-bill of travellers.

'Monsieur,' said the stranger, turning round to me, when he had run his eye over the list, 'the place is undoubtedly yours. I ask a thousand pardons for the incivilities you have been subjected to. For myself, I knew not I was trespassing on your rights; but for these people here'—His voice sounded like a trumpet through the court, as he bade them remove his cloak and luggage to the *banquette*, and he read a lecture to 'Messieurs les Commis' such as was new to the 'Bureau des Messageries' at Marseille.

There was something so frank and prepossessing in the manners of Le Colonel Rembert—as the sunburnt officer was styled on the way-bill—that when I saw him mount on to the *banquette*, I began to regret that my seat was not there likewise; and so, regardless of inconsistency, I contrived, at the end of the first stage, to effect an exchange that placed me by his side. Pleased with this tacit compliment, the young officer hastened to shew me attention, and

in a short time we were discussing the topics of the day with interest on both sides. Colonel Rembert had been away from home for some years, and shewed a lively interest in the affairs of his country. As I suspected, he had just returned from Algiers, where he had gained promotion and the scar that sealed his dark face.

In those days of wearisome travelling, I should have found the journey intolerable but for the society of my new acquaintance. We were three days making our way back to L—, which lay between us and Paris, and all that time the autumn sun shone down with a tropical intensity upon the long and dusty roads.

As there were no means of proceeding to Paris until the following day, Colonel Rembert—between whom and myself a very friendly feeling had sprung up—decided to accompany me to the hotel where I was about to stay. It was not the old one on the Grande Place, associated with so many memories, but was situated in another quarter of the town, near the Rue Hérold.

I was burning with anxiety to put some questions to the people of the hotel respecting the Darrons, but a horror of hearing their history discussed in a public room prevented me. As we sat at table, I could see through the hotel windows some old tattered play-bills on a wall opposite, announcing Mademoiselle Darron's appearance in one of her favourite parts. It was a ghastly mockery that made my heart ache.

Colonel Rembert joined in the conversation going on with the zest of a man long absent from his country. As an officer returned from foreign service, he carried with him a passport to general favour. André, the waiter, like a true son of France, hovered assiduously about his chair, and brought him the finest peaches, the coolest wines he could lay his hands on.

'What a happy man you are!' I exclaimed, as we rose from the table together. 'Going home to your friends—returning to Paris; why, with those medals and decorations of yours, you will be the lion of your circle for a month to come!'

'Circle?—Friends? Pah! A soldier's circle is in the mess-room—his friends, his brother-officers. I shall not make the sensation you anticipate for me, mon ami; and he laughed rather bitterly, I thought.

I looked at him earnestly as he sat turning over the leaves of a journal at a side-table. Colonel Rembert was perhaps a man to be less envied than I had imagined. There were traces of other rough usage than that the vicissitudes of a soldier's life bring with it, in the lines that furrowed his face. He was still looking over the paper, when he exclaimed: 'There is an opera, I see, in L— to-night. Who is this going to play Amina in *La Sonnambule*? Darron, Mademoiselle Darron, is the lady's name?'

'What! To-night? Mademoiselle Darron?' I ejaculated, snatching the paper from his hands.

'Where? Where did you see it? You are wrong—you are wrong.'

'Pardon me—see there!' and Colonel Rembert stared at me in amazement, as he pointed to the paragraph. My senses refused to comprehend it. There, on the printed page I held, it was announced that Josephine Darron would make her first appearance since her recent illness, that very night! I stood speechless.

'You know the lady, perhaps? Is she really as great a genius as the press of L— would have one believe?' asked Colonel Rembert. 'What say you to our going to judge for ourselves? I am an idle man to-night.'

'Go?' I exclaimed: 'yes, at once—this very moment. We shall yet be there in time;' and, without offering an explanation, I hurried my companion

into the theatre to inform him of the supposition that he had left of his room a dense out, five I turned him if t

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into the street. We reached the doors of the theatre before I had time even to do more than inform him that I knew Mademoiselle Darron, as he supposed, and on quitting L—— a short time since, had left her dangerously ill. I have no recollection of his reply; I only remember that we went in with a dense crowd, and that the house was filled throughout, five minutes after the doors were opened. Once I turned to a neighbour in the pit, and demanded of him if the principal singer had been long ill.

'La Darron? O no; only a little indisposition,' he supposed. 'We could not afford to lose our star yet—no, no;' and he shrugged his shoulders and went on laughing and talking with the friend by his side. I felt sick with apprehension. Could it be possible that I was awaiting the appearance on the stage of her whom I had last seen in a paroxysm of insanity? Josephine Darron, even had she recovered her reason, could not be returning to her profession again: the idea was monstrous, revolting. I sat beating away the wild fancies that rose up before me as I watched for the uprising of the curtain.

At length a bell tinkled, strains of music broke from the orchestra, and the curtain slowly rose. I could see nothing at first for the sudden agitation that came over me; then, when I had grown calmer, I beheld the group of village maidens awaiting the appearance of Amina. After the opening music had been sung, there was a silvery laugh heard, and the next moment, amidst the silence of the audience, the heroine came on. She bends low before the thunders of applause that burst forth, then advances to gather up the bouquets that are thrown her. She has reached the footlights, and stands in the full blaze of the whole house. It is none other—it is Josephine Darron!

To see her standing there, beautiful and self-possessed, with that other picture of her in my memory, was at once the saddest and most appalling contradiction. Not the pang I suffered in finding her mad on the floor of her chamber equalled what I endured in beholding her there now. Her glance ran round the house in acknowledgment of the applause, and then she threw herself into her part with all the abandon and freshness of her own bright genius. Knowing what I did, I felt that it was impossible for me to remain a spectator. I was on the point of withdrawing, when suddenly the bird-like voice on which every ear hung entranced, ceased. Mademoiselle Darron, in one moment, had turned ashy white, and stood trembling in every limb. There was a wild gleam in her eye, and her gaze was fastened on the spot where I sat, as though she beheld a spectre there. The chorus, in affright, started back, and stood gazing at her as at one possessed; the orchestra grew mute, while a terrible silence settled over the whole house. What is it that Mademoiselle Darron sees in us that she stares thus wildly? Her lips work as though she strove to articulate; one hand is pressed on her brow, the other on her heart; she is convulsed; she is going mad. The next moment, a loud cry rang through the theatre, and Josephine Darron fell, like one dead, upon the floor.

The whole house was a scene of uproar; on all sides there was a clamouring of voices, and dismay. I saw the black curtain sinking down, and beheld a gray-haired old man carried out from the orchestra; but I saw no more. My hand was grasped as though in a vice by the companion at my side. Colonel Rembert seemed suffocating. Great drops of sweat stood upon his brow, and a hoarse sound issued from his chest. With an immense effort, he stood up, and broke a way through the mass of human beings about us. I followed on his steps, hastening I knew not whither, but conscious that a crisis was at hand.

I have a recollection of traversing lobbies and dim passages, of diving into strange, lamp-lighted recesses, of coming suddenly upon motley groups in stage costume. On all sides, people gave way before my companion; there was that in his air that told them it would be dangerous to intercept him. At length we reached the green-room; there, surrounded by the frightened people of the place, lay Josephine Darron, pale and lifeless, as they had borne her from the stage. Colonel Rembert was at her side in a moment. One glance at his face, as he bent over her, revealed to me the right by which he approached her thus: it was Fabien de Moléon who knelt by her couch.

'Air—air!' he cried; and he put aside the thronging women, and took her in his arms.

None questioned the right by which he assumed authority there.

'Where is her father? Where is her home here? Who knows?'

He looked round, and his eye caught mine. I was endeavouring to rouse M. Darron, who was lying almost insensible on a bench near. The old man heard the voice, and looked round.

'Home, Fabien? Yes; what is it? I am better now; we must go home. O God, my daughter!' The sight of his child had restored to him suddenly a knowledge of what had happened.

I had sent for a carriage, and hastened to tell Colonel Rembert it was at the door. My anxiety to remove them from this place was great; I dreaded the exposure that would follow on Josephine's recovery. Perhaps, now, her reason had fled for ever.

When at last we reached the old house on the Grande Place, it tortured me to think of the terrible discovery the brave colonel had still to make. Little did he dream, as he bore his loved burden up the old stairs, what a fearful change sorrow had wrought there. I could have prayed, as I saw her lying in his arms, that that might be death which looked so like it. Better her spirit should pass away thus, than return to a home where there was darkness deeper than that of the grave.

But no, she lives! Josephine Darron stirs, sighs, then opens her eyes, and gazes up into the face bending over her. There is a smile upon her face—a smile of reason—of deep content. We stand around in silence, Marthe, M. Darron, and I. Josephine is speaking to De Moléon in a low and gentle voice; Marthe, the grim, grenadier-like Marthe, is weeping; M. Darron is gazing at them with a working face; and I—I am awaking from the nightmare that has oppressed me these many weeks.

See, there is a strange figure hovering in the background! The door at the further end of the room has slowly opened, and another Josephine stands staring at the scene!

'O Heaven! it is Louise!' screams Marthe, wringing her hands in dismay.

'Louise, my poor Louise; come here, sister.' Josephine Darron half rose from her couch, and spoke in the tone in which one addresses a child. 'You love to see me happy, Louise? Well, I am happy, very happy, to-night.' She drew the forlorn figure to her side, and kissed her on the brow.

The girl looked strangely at us, then laughed a low, idiotic laugh, and began playing with Josephine's long hair. Even there, side by side, there is the same likeness to be seen; and, as I gaze at them, the secret of that gloomy household, the mystery of many weeks, reveals itself to my wondering eyes. In that blighted creature crouching at Josephine's side, I recognise the spectre that has long haunted me—it is Mademoiselle Darron's twin-sister.

It was a strange scene on which the moon shone that night in the old chamber. I see it all before me

now: the grim-faced Marthe; the gray-haired father; the poor idiot girl, twining her long fingers in her sister's hair; and, bright centre of it all, Josephine, with peace shining in her face, and her hand clasped in that of the sunburnt soldier.

There remains little to be said. Ere I quitted L——, Josephine Duménil—Darron being the name, as I have said, which she had assumed on entering her profession—became the wife of Colonel de Moléon. Our intimacy, commenced so strangely, continues to this day, and, until her private history became known to me, I little dreamed of the beauty and heroism Josephine's life had displayed. Bound by a promise to her dying mother never to forsake her twin-sister, nor to leave her to the care of strangers, she had nobly fulfilled her charge. Aided by their old servant, Marthe, she had watched over her with a devotion that was sublime in its sacrifice of self. She had been repaid in the docile affection of the idiot girl. In her wildest moods, Louise was obedient to Josephine's voice, and often, when some cruel fancy or wild excitement preyed on the poor sufferer, the 'grande artiste' would rise from her bed, and sing the maniac girl to sleep.

When these and other things were made known to me in the days that followed, I felt that beautiful as the life of the young singer had seemed to me, viewed in the light of her genius and her sorrows, yet its truest beauties had been those known only to her own household on the Grande Place of L——.

THE MONTH:

SCIENCE AND ARTS.

Among the freshest and most interesting of scientific topics, are certain facts concerning which our geologists are in a state of surprise and excitement; so much so, that an extraordinary meeting of the Geological Society was held to discuss the matter. One is the discovery of flint implements—knives and axe-heads—near Amiens, at the bottom of a stratum of gravel, and from nineteen to twenty-five feet below the surface. The things have been actually found *in situ*—some by English geologists—where there is no appearance of the gravel ever having been previously disturbed; and what is more remarkable, in a spot which forms the top of a hill. The implements are in great numbers; and the conclusion is, that they testify to the existence of man on the earth, at a period anterior to that commonly supposed, thus confirming similar conclusions drawn from the discoveries made in the Brixham cave, and elsewhere. The other fact is one which we have heretofore incidentally mentioned: the exploration of a cave, Grotta di Macagnone, near Palermo, by Dr Falconer, where bones of extinct species of animals were found in astonishing quantities, along with fragments of charcoal, and knives of flint and agate in great number imbedded in the breccia. The importance of this discovery may be judged of from the fact that hippopotami appear to have swarmed on the spot. Of the bone known to anatomists as the astragalus, Dr Falconer picked up nearly a hundred examples within the space of a few feet; and this bone is so easy of identification, as to leave no room for doubt. The existence of the bones has long been known to the natives, who have at times taken from the ancient store to burn into ivory-black; but this is the first scientific investigation that has been made of the interesting deposit.

Professor Sylvester, of the Royal Military Academy, whose name stands among the foremost of mathematicians, has given a course of lectures at King's College on some new discoveries with respect to the

partitions of numbers, and of applications of the theory arising therefrom. His audience has been fit though few, comprising the most eminent geometers and mathematicians; and he has surprised them all by the skill and ingenuity with which he has illustrated abstruse problems by mechanical means: not less admirable than the mechanical illustrations of the complex forms of crystals shown by the Rev. W. Mitchell in his lecture at the Royal Institution.

Submarine telegraphy is making good progress: another cable is to be laid from the coast of Norfolk to Toning, in Denmark—three hundred and eighty-eight miles. The benefit of the Red Sea telegraph has been already felt in the earlier arrival of the Indian advices by nearly a week. There would have been direct communication ere this from Aden to London through Constantinople, had not a temporary failure occurred in the attempt to lay a line from Alexandria to Candia. It is probable that by the time these lines appear in print, the failure will have been rectified, and it will be scarce a figure of speech to say that the West shakes hands with the East. A line is to be laid from Sicily to Malta; and it appears that another trial is to be made to span the great ocean, by a new Atlantic telegraph company with a guarantee from government. Guided by experience, they intend to use the lightest and at the same time strongest form of cable; and if the *Great Eastern* should become available before the autumnal equinox sets in, a new trial may be made with reasonable chance of success. Meantime, certain experimentalists are busy with what they call the Globe telegraph; that is, they send the signal through the earth, and only use an insulated wire for the return current. The signal current is generated by plates of iron, platinum, and zinc, buried in the ground, and is sufficiently powerful to produce a deflection of the needles, irrespective, as the experimenters say, of distance.

A suggestion has been thrown out, that if the cable were sunk but a few feet beneath the surface, and there suspended by elastic spiral buoys, it would answer its purpose better, and be more easy of repair and recovery, than when sunk to the very bottom of the ocean. We may inquire, in reply, whether such a cable would resist an Atlantic storm or a floating iceberg? On the other hand, Lieutenant Maury, of the National Observatory, Washington, shews that there are the best of all reasons for sinking the cable to the bottom: because once at rest on the bottom, and properly coated, it will be indestructible. He holds, that it was a mistake to twist the heavy iron coat round the conducting wire, necessitating a cumbersome system of brakes in the paying-out; because, if only made heavy enough to sink, the telegraphic cord will be quite safe when sunk to the bottom. He shews, what is well known to sailors, that if you twist a spiral covering round a straight core, it is always the core or heart which suffers most, and gives way first, when subject to strain. So, instead of a heavy, stiff iron cable, he would have his copper wires prepared and coated in the way described as 'Rogers's cord,' which is not larger than a common log-line, and which can be payed out without difficulty in the ordinary voyage of a ship. Such a cord will sink at the rate of about two miles an hour; and Lieutenant Maury feels confident that a divergence of half a mile is all that is to be apprehended from currents. He professes to deal only with the Neptunian part of the question, leaving the electrical to others, and thinks that he has resolved the difficulty. 'I have no doubt whatever,' he says, 'as to the ultimate success of a telegraph across the Atlantic. The sea offers no obstruction on account of its depths or its currents to lines of any length. A line, with an unbroken conducting wire, across the

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Atlantic or the Pacific, is as practicable as one across the Alps or the Andes. In the long-run, and mile for mile, I do not think there would be much, if any difference in cost between the two. The real question for future projectors of lines of submarine telegraph is, not how deep, or how boisterous, or how wide the sea is, but what are the electrical limits to the length of submarine lines.'

The Society of Arts have held their eighth annual conference with the institutions in union, and their 105th anniversary meeting. They have published full particulars concerning the preparation and use of water-glass—the silicious fluid which has been sometimes called oil of flint. Four kinds are described: potash water-glass; soda water-glass; double water-glass; and a fixing water-glass. The subject is well worthy of consideration, because water-glass, besides being applicable as a varnish to preserve walls and buildings, can be advantageously used for decorative purposes, internal as well as external: as an element of beauty as well as of strength and durability.

Another matter taken up by the Society is that of a uniform musical pitch. They have held a meeting to consider it, presided over by Dr Whewell; but the question is one which cannot be decided off-hand, being beset by essential difficulties. For instance, the pitch of an instrument varies in the same room, and is never the same at night in the heat of gas and a large audience, as during the day. The tendency for some years past has been towards a raising of the pitch, hence voices are strained and overstrained, and utterly ruined, which might have lasted for years with fair-play. A uniform pitch has lately been adopted in France; and some professors think that the same should be adopted here; but while there are national as well as individual differences in the quality of voice, we do not see how it will be possible to set up a standard for the whole of Europe. The question is not so easy of solution as that of uniformity of weights and measures: we hope, however, that the committee appointed to take it into consideration will arrive at a satisfactory conclusion.

A paper read before the Royal Society by Mr Henfrey, 'On the Anatomy of Victoria Regia,' is in remarkable contrast to a fact mentioned by Captain Page of the American navy, in his narrative of the expedition to Paraguay. The magnificent water-lily, it appears, abounds in the shallow waters of that country, and the natives, Corrientinos, collect the seeds, and convert them into bread. If the quality be in proportion to the size of the flower, Victoria Regia bread should be super-excellent.

A use has been suggested for the roots of fir-trees, namely, reducing them to fibres, which may be woven into baskets and wattle-work, after the Indian manner. Of the toughness and beautiful appearance of the fibres when converted, there can be no doubt.—M. Fremy finds that the cells of the epidermis of vegetables are covered by a membrane which resembles an animal substance. It saponifies, when properly treated; but is not soluble in alcohol, as fatty substances generally are. He proposes to call it *cutine*, and says: 'Is it not remarkable to find something on the surface of a vegetable which presents the stability of a fat body, the continuity of a membrane, the tenacity of ligneous tissue, and in some sort the elasticity of caoutchouc?' By reason of these properties, *cutine* adopts all vegetable forms, however delicate, prevents the penetration of the oxygen of the atmosphere to the interior of the cells, and thus protects the reticular tissue from external agencies that would alter or injure it.—Despretz has made a series of experiments to determine, as he says, that chemical elements are elements, and that to consider them as decomposable is a hindrance to science.

Another Frenchman answers that the question may be better stated thus—the radicals of mineral chemistry, if compounds, are so stable that no known force will decompose them. The time may, however, come when the decomposition will be easy; and a clue to the process would seem to be afforded by Mr Sorby's experiments, which shew an astonishing change in the structure and appearance of glass produced by extremes of heat and pressure.

Certain physiologists at Paris have been trying experiments with a view to prove that, by the administration of drugs to a mother to affect her milk, a weakly child may be restored to health. The experiments have been tried on cows, and by long-continued doses, an effect has been produced, which hitherto has been thought beyond the reach of medicine.—Certain chemists are still at work on experiments for the discovery of a compound that shall resemble the pancreatic secretion. This secretion, as physiologists know, is highly important in the process of digestion or assimilation of food, and if some medication could be found similar in quality, there would be at once an end to that distressing malady, indigestion. These investigations are characteristic of the progress of scientific medicine, and we heartily wish them success. If successful, we may hope that fraudulent imitators will leave them alone, for only by absolute purity of the preparation will cures be possible.—Dr Edward Smith has read papers before the Medical and Chirurgical Society, shewing that the human body is subject to cyclical changes which are not sufficiently taken into account by medical practitioners and hospital attendants who commonly pursue an unvarying mode of treatment. As regards the respiratory phenomena, he shews that they are not so energetic in summer as in winter; and that those and other changes have more to do with the progress of disease than the meteorological influences which are not unfrequently said to be implicated.

Professor Dove, of Berlin, has published a short paper on the use of the stereoscope in the detection of forgeries, whether commercial or literary. By placing the suspected document, and comparing it with a known original under the stereoscope, the difference is manifest at once, for the slightest variation of space between words or lines, the slightest difference of position in an engraving, are immediately detected. The method is applicable to drawings and engravings, to printed books and bank-notes; and honest men will rejoice in a discovery which increases the difficulty of falsification. Wheatstone's mirror-stereoscope is the one that should be used; and those who try the experiment will be surprised to see how some of the lines seem to start forward, and others to recede, according as they disagree in position.

A promising thing for the typographic art is Silbermann's universal printing-press, which, by the use of a cushion of air or water, adapts itself to all kinds of surfaces, and will even print a globe or cylinder as well as a flat surface. It is especially serviceable for large maps, as the pressure is equal on every part, and it adapts itself readily to any material, from paper or linen to glass.—In the Report on the twenty-sixth exhibition of American inventions, we find notice of praiseworthy improvements in sewing-machines, whereby they are made more efficient, and to cost less. From twenty-five to thirty dollars (five to six guineas) is now the charge for a machine that will put in 4000 stitches a minute. In the list of American patents, we notice an expanding screw, contrived to open below by means of a wedge as it enters the beam or sleeper, and is, therefore, not liable to 'draw.' Another patent appeals to cricketers, for the inventor makes his bat with a hollow blade, fills it with cork, and inserts a whalebone core down the centre of the

handle. Machines for folding paper are announced which will give any number of parallel folds, and reverse for the cross fold. Paper is made from the fibre of the *Arundinaria*, which in the southern states forms such large cane-brakes. Readers of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* will perhaps be glad to hear of a contrivance for picking cotton by steam: a traction engine is brought into the plantation, and from this, flexible tubes are led and presented to the cotton pod; and a vacuum being produced in the tubes, the pod is plucked by the external pressure, and a number of rows can be picked at once. Another inventor puts forward an apparatus for killing pigs; another, an adjustable clothes-post, which can be raised or lowered at pleasure; another, a railway-station indicator, to be placed inside the carriages, and so contrived as to notify to the passengers the name of the station at which the train will stop next.

The Franklin Institute at Philadelphia have discussed Mr Prosser's method for economising steam, which saves two-thirds of the quantity of coal usually consumed, requires no air-pump, and employs a hot, and not a cold condenser; the economy consisting in the fact, that he 'reduces the temperature of the steam only so much as is necessary to bring the water under control.'—With respect to another process, it appears that we must now regard Bessemer's conversion of common pig iron into good malleable iron while in the fluid state as an accomplished fact. The iron so converted is so tough, that a bar three inches square can be doubled up under the hammer without a crack or flaw. Plates can be made of almost any dimensions; hence, fewer rivets will be necessary, and boilers and similar constructions will be stronger. Bessemer's process is now in constant operation at Sheffield, and is introduced into the ironworks of Belgium and Sweden.

An American, noticing the project for a Wedgewood testimonial, suggests that, instead of a statue, or anything of that sort, Staffordshire should set to work and produce the very best and cheapest patterns of earthenware for ordinary use—plate, cup, jug, dinner-service, &c., &c.—and send a specimen of each as 'memorial ware' to the manufacturers of pottery in all parts of the world. We think there is practical wisdom in this suggestion, and should like to see it carried out.

With so much cleverness always available in inventions, it is surprising that no one has yet invented a proper method of watering streets. We recommend the subject to the consideration of those able to deal with it; for even in London, in far-famed Regent Street, the present contractors mistake making a road muddy for laying the dust. It ought not to be impossible to subdue the dust without converting it into mire. In this particular, the metropolitan thoroughfares are a reproach to the inventive genius of the age; as is also the condition of the Thames and of the Serpentine.

A DANGEROUS EXPERIMENT.

In the report of a Matrimonial Difference recently exhibited before the Divorce Court to public admiration, the husband was shewn to have adapted from the stage to private life a singular method of regaining his wife's lost affections. He borrowed, from *The Love-chase*, the idea of writing *billets doux* to and from an imaginary young woman, and of leaving them in the way of his spouse, with the intention of provoking her to Jealousy, and by that roundabout method, to Love. The final result of which too ingenious contrivance was, that she obtained a separation.

However allowable and innocent these little experiments may be in themselves, we do not think their

general adoption in domestic circles would be advisable. One instance only do we know wherein any method other than the straightforward has in the end succeeded. It is the case of a certain rich old lady, who, whenever one of her daughters gets 'engaged,' insists upon accompanying her and her intended upon a sort of 'experimental trip,' before the matrimonial one, to Switzerland or other foreign country. If the gentleman acquits himself with unselfishness and good temper amid all his trials of getting passports *viséd* and of taking care of luggage, he is permitted to carry off his prize; but if he exhibit, under any circumstances, the cloven hoof, he gets his *congé* from mamma. We are bound to say this plan has proved most successful; and indeed, it is perhaps only, after all, a measure of extreme precaution, and cannot well be called by any harsher name. The police, indeed, are in the habit of trying their suspected fellow-creatures by ordeals, such as putting marked money, which they intend to be stolen, into letter-boxes, but the system is even in their case open to censure; while who that, in his youth, has been addicted to jam and averse to jalap, but would detest its introduction into our own households? Imagine a trusting lad, whose worst weakness is that of having a sweet tooth, repairing to the well-known though forbidden preserve cupboard, inserting his ingenious fingers into *all* the pots—so that the deficiency should be equally distributed, and charitably ascribed to fermentation—hovering from sweet to sweet like the busy bee, and in the seventh (or eighth, perhaps) heaven of an enjoyment that he will never feel in manhood or even adolescence; and conceive the change in that blithe boy, if the ogress, the Housekeeper, shall have mingled with her lessening stores one of the most powerful of domestic medicines! We draw a veil over that guilty woman's mental state, as over the young gentleman's physical condition. His revenge, on the other hand, would be base, however fitting, if he should introduce into the spirit-bottle of his father's cellaret any medicinal liquid calculated to disagree with *her*. The stern moralist, approving the conduct of neither one nor the other, can only shake his head, and send for the family apothecary.

Would it be fair to Mr Younghusband himself, who is forbidden to smoke, or even to frequent the company of smokers, if his wife should leave a cigar-box in his study, and come in upon him unexpectedly at the second whiff, while he was leaning his body perhaps half out of window, to prevent the possibility of annoyance to her from the delicate perfume? Or would it be fair to Mrs — But that is the very matter we are coming to, which, affording as it does a warning to all persons who are tempted to make dangerous experiments upon the virtue of their fellow-creatures, must by no means be dismissed in a paragraph.

Mr Younghusband, although he has been married a good deal more than once, is nevertheless—singular to say—somewhat suspicious of Women. Far from being in general an admirer of Lord Byron or his opinions, he yet agrees with that poet in ascribing a very considerable influence over the softer sex to Opportunity. 'If a woman sees a becoming bonnet that she knows she can never afford to buy, sir, and the milliner says: "It's no consequence, ma'am; I can wait for the money a little while;" she'll come home with that bonnet upon her head, or in a bandbox, to a certainty. They *can't* resist it, sir, for resistance isn't in 'em.'

Such being Mr Y.'s openly expressed opinion, one would imagine that he would be the last person to have made experiments of a tentative kind upon his own better-halves—that the attraction of the earth being settled, he would not be throwing apples

into the air all day to see whether they would come down or no. Such, however, we regret to say, is the fact, and even in the case of the last, that is to say the present, Mrs Younghusband, our suspicious friend could not forbear testing her conjugal devotion. There was not, we beg to state, the very slightest ground for such a proceeding; the gentleman is a good-looking, smooth-faced personage, of peaceful appearance—being indeed a clergyman—and the lady looks up to him (he having considerably the advantage in point of years) with the affectionate reverence that is his due; they get on, in short, exceedingly well together, and he is not so addicted as so experienced a matrimonialist might be forgiven for being, to throwing at her the good-behaviour of his other wives, whenever she displeases him.

It was during their wedding-tour, and while they were journeying from Bristol northward, that the idea of the unwarrantable proceeding which we are about to relate, entered suddenly into his foolish old noddle. Most persons have heard of the Box Tunnel—the largest but one, if not the largest, of the Tartarean roads for which our railways are celebrated; the ordinary Great Western speed is lessened as its trains burrow under that long hill, and only a well-like shaft at rare intervals assures the passenger that, in spite of appearances, he has not left daylight for ever.

In the same first-class carriage with the Younghusbands, got in at Bath a young dragoon, hirsute and of a martial countenance, at sight of whom the wary Benedict—or Benedictissimus—thus soliloquised as they were about to enter the tunnel: 'Now will I prove my Angelina, that she loves me and only me, and that the attractions of even this handsome hero would be quite thrown away upon her.' So, in the darkness and the thunder of their subterranean journey, this cunning man leaned forward in his seat—so that his face would seem to come from the opposite side where sat the soldier—and on the lip of his unsuspecting consort imprinted an experimental kiss. He was back again, and wearing an unconscious countenance as they whirled beneath the shaft, when the momentary light revealed his bride—O heavens!—as quiet, composed, and innocent of anything having just occurred, as himself! Again this deceiver did it, again and again, as many kisses did he bestow upon her as there were shafts—as though they had been Cupid's shafts—and still the lady took them, and made neither sign nor scream. Mr Younghusband was almost out of his mind with jealousy, and ready to tear from his head that hair among which the fingers of Time had already been gleaning. There was but a very little darkness now remaining wherein the star of Angelina's constancy might yet display itself—the space between the last shaft and the termination of the tunnel. This precious interval he employed in counterfeiting with renewed care his military *vis-à-vis*; he fortunately possessed a very long neck; and by craning round, he even succeeded in saluting the dear girl upon the cheek that was, according to their relative positions, away from him—thereby, as he imagined, placing the identity of himself with the handsome dragoon beyond all question with her.

Conceive, therefore, Mr Younghusband's excessive dismay when his Angelina, after suffering him with much equanimity to 'graze'—as he subsequently expressed it, to Mrs Y.'s indignation—for a considerable period, very quietly kissed him again. In the whole annals of love-making, there was never probably any precedent for a swain so singularly discomfited; if she had but slapped his face, he would have thanked her from the bottom of his heart. Mr Younghusband had often had occasion to moralise, professionally, upon the vile hypocrisy of the human

family; but he had never before beheld, as he thought, so tremendous an example of it as he read in his Angelina's face when it emerged from that Box Tunnel. Had she been a Sister of Charity, who had employed herself throughout the darkness in telling her beads or saying her prayers, she could not have presented to his astonished gaze a more childlike expression of feminine innocence.

He told her to let down the window, which had been closed during the passage, in so sharp a marital tone, that the dragoon looked up in chivalric pity for her, and drove Mr Y. thereby to the confines of madness; nor was it without difficulty that he repressed his indignation until that disturber of his peace had left the carriage, and himself and his abandoned helpmate were once more alone together.

'Madam,' cried he, 'that fellow kissed you as we came through the tunnel, and you know it.'

'But how do you know it?' asked Mrs Younghusband with a comical twinkle of her eye that would have disarmed a pacha.

'And you kissed him again,' continued he, in vain endeavouring to keep warm his jealous wrath.

'Only once,' replied Angelina laughing—'only once and away.'

It was impossible that even Mr Younghusband could hold out any longer in his unwarrantable suspicions, so he relapsed at once into confidence and the domestic affections.

'But, Angelina, my love, do tell me; how did you know it was me?'

'Know?' answered she naïvely—'why, very easily; it's as different as possible when a person has moustaches and when a person has not!'

Mr Younghusband, who had been upon the point of regaining tranquillity, was plunged once more into suspicions by this reply; but he has made up his mind to believe this, at all events—that nothing satisfactory is to be derived from any experiments of the dangerous character of the above.

THE VALUE OF A SONG.

A BIBLIOPOLIC friend, of much experience in the profession, used to talk of writing a book under the title of *The Calamities of Publishers*, as a sort of offset against Mr Disraeli's *Calamities of Authors*. Certes, authors and publishers are two sets of people who produce no small amount of pain and misery to each other; it might be difficult to say on which side of the joint account the balance lies. One great cause of grief to the publisher would probably have been stated by our friend thus: author sells publisher a copyright for a sum of money; when the speculation turns out well, author feels cheated; when ill, nobody thinks author cheats. From this simple, but, it must be admitted, partial way of viewing the bargains of the two parties, arises a pretty general habit of regarding publishers as robbers and murderers of authors—a frame of thinking extremely apt to damage them in the making of acts of parliament.

The law of copyright seems purposely surrounded with difficulties for the publisher, in order to establish means for circumventing him. It does not very clearly appear from the various statutes on the subject, that he can have a copyright without a regular deed of assignment from the author, signed by two witnesses. Observe the effect of this. An author is constantly in want; he gets money in partial payments beforehand. At the last, he may refuse to give the deed of assignment without a further sum. Or the labours of an author may have consisted of contributions to a work;

may have been mere editorial work, a sentence added here and there; or it may have been work executed under a salary designed to cover all obligation. In these circumstances, getting assignments for everything is in a manner impossible. Yet a dishonest author—and, unfortunately, there are such persons, though it seems to be amongst the 'facts not generally known'—is under the temptation to extort or sue for further remuneration, on the plea of the want of assignment. Nor is iniquitous intention necessary to visit an unfortunate publisher with this harassment: a mistaken sense of right may come to precisely the same effect.

A case has just finished its course through the law-courts, which powerfully illustrates the wretched character of the copyright laws for the protection of the rights of publishers. An authoress sold a song for two pounds two shillings, and granted a receipt as for the copyright of it, but without giving a formal assignment. (Think of a formal deed with witnesses about such a bargain!) The publication was successful. The authoress, probably feeling, as usual, that she had been defrauded of her proper profits, assumed to herself the privilege of selling the same right of publishing to another tradesman, and felt protected by law in doing so, as there had been no assignment in the first instance. The original publisher raised an action in the Scotch courts against the second one, and the authoress came in as a defender. In July 1855, a jury decided that the receipt was a sufficient evidence of copyright. Not satisfied with this result, the defenders brought forward a bill of exceptions and motion for a new trial, and, to the great amusement of the whole 'Outer-house,' the song of the *Old Arm-chair* was once more under judgment in May 1856. The second trial ended as the first had done. The lords decided that a deed of assignment was not, in the present state of the law, required. One sagaciously pointed out that, in bankruptcy, sequestration, marriage, and succession, copyrights would undoubtedly be transferred without any such deed. How, then, could it be held as essential?

This last decision was appealed from to the House of Lords; and only the other day the case came forward in that august court, being apparently the first that was brought before Lord Chancellor Campbell. His Lordship and Lord Brougham found that the bill of exceptions had been informally drawn, and therefore could not be sustained; but they both said that, though the appeal thus failed merely on a point of form, the merits of the case were with the respondent, who clearly was the proprietor of the copyright. The judgment of the court below was affirmed with costs. Now, here was the publisher at length, after six years of litigation, allowed to be the proprietor of an article of trifling value, which he had *bonâ fide* bought and paid for; at what an expense of time, trouble, and probably money also—for costs are never wholly recovered—had he established his right! And here, too, is an authoress whom we have all reason to believe a respectable and well-intending person, led by the dubious state of the law, and probably some confused sense of having suffered injustice, into a course of litigation involving the loss of many hundreds—possibly thousands—of pounds, all about a little poetical composition, such as, we presume, is every day sold for no more than the sum in question, and all merely owing to a doubtful voice from a plurality of statutes as to something required to constitute literary property in a second owner.

The *Old Arm-chair* will probably be a memorable case in both sections of the island; but its first effect ought to be to prompt a consolidated literary property act, clearing the ground between author and publisher of much dubious matter now resting upon it.

THE DIVER.

UNDER the Sea they lie,
The deep, dark Sea;
No one comes there to pry,
No man save me.
I and the Fishes dim,
Swift, staring, strange,
In and about that swim,
Whilst the Dead change.

They that each sit and stand
In their own place,
(Clammy hand clasped in hand,
Wet face to face),
As when through Night and Snow
Struck the blind ship—
Still seems the cry to go
Past the white lip.

As I tread down the stair,
First do I see
(Round the tarn, unware)
One who knows me.
Stretched is his bloodless hand,
Fixed his glazed eye;
Though like a friend he stand,
Him know not I.

No need to ope the door;
Soon as I'm spied,
Dread creatures cross the floor,
'Thwart the roof glide;
I with my Helmet on—
That it must be
Which the foul creatures shun
'Neath the green Sea—

But o'er the Dead, that all
Seem to live still,
Fearless they climb and crawl,
Slow, at their will;
Dumb, with protruding eyes
Cast half behind,
Horn and Shell at the prize
Most to their mind.

Where twine dead Lovers' arms,
There the claw strays;
(Ill her corpse beauty charms
His filmy gaze!)
Where the dead Wife's caressed;
Where Mother's cheek
To that babe-mouth is pressed
Never to speak.

Once these looked shame on me,
Now I'm grown bold,
Under the deep dark Sea
Shines the red gold;
Though one kept watch by it,
I took his keys;
There did he stare and sit
While I took these.

O'er all that peopled ship
Lies my dim way,
What suits my mailed grip
None gives me 'nay';
No man of those that lie
'Neath the deep sea,
Whither none comes to pry,
No man save me.

EMERITUS.

Printed and Published by W. & R. CHAMBERS, 47 Paternoster Row, LONDON, and 239 High Street, EDINBURGH. Also sold by WILLIAM ROBERTSON, 23 Upper Sackville Street, DUBLIN, and all Booksellers.